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DEPT FOR EAP/K, EAP/PD, INR/EAP/K AND INR/IL/P  
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STATE PASS USDA ELECTRONICALLY FOR FAS/ITP  
STATE PASS DOL/ILAB SUDHA HALEY  
STATE PASS USTR FOR IVES/WEISEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: PRESS BULLETIN - January 8, 2009

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Hankyoreh Shinmun  
First Round of Corporate Restructuring Expected Soon

Segye Ilbo, Seoul Shinmun  
Israel Accepts Gaza Ceasefire with Conditions

#### Domestic Developments

[1](#)1. According to the Blue House, Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso  
will visit Seoul for two days from Jan. 11 to discuss pending  
bilateral issues with President Lee Myung-bak on Jan. 12. In  
particular, it is said that the two leaders will agree to launch a  
joint project to help rebuild Afghanistan during the summit. (All)

## International News

1. According to an official from the Obama camp, Wendy Sherman, former U.S. North Korea Policy Coordinator, will likely be named as Special Envoy on North Korea for the incoming Obama Administration. The source was further quoted as commenting that Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill will step down from his position dealing with North Korean affairs. (JoongAng, Hankyoreh, Seoul)

2. North Korea announced yesterday that it will hold parliamentary elections in March, a possible sign of the North Korean regime returning to normal with leader Kim Jong-il's health improving. (All)

## Media Analysis

### Gaza

Israel's acceptance yesterday of a Franco-Egyptian plan for a ceasefire in Gaza received wide play. Citing foreign media, the ROK media reported that Israel, faced with international outrage over its Jan. 6 strike near a UN school that killed 42 Palestinians, accepted the cease-fire plan on condition that the plan stops Hamas from firing rockets into Israel and stops the militant group from re-arming. The ROK media went on to say that Israel also agreed to suspend its military offensive for three hours a day and to permit humanitarian relief goods to reach besieged Palestinians. The Israeli cabinet was quoted as saying yesterday that it will push ahead with the military offensive while at the same time pursuing the cease-fire option.

Left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun editorialized: "Most of the more than 600 Palestinians killed so far are civilians. Under no circumstances can this kind of massacre be justified. Nevertheless, President Bush supported Israel, saying that Israel has decided to defend itself. The UN also failed to adopt a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza in the face of the U.S.'s opposition. As Israel's biggest donor, the U.S. is the only country capable of putting the brakes on the Israeli massacre. However, far from persuading Israel to stop, the U.S. is acting like an accomplice."

### North Korea

The ROK media gave wide play to a North Korean announcement yesterday that the North will hold parliamentary elections in March. Most of the ROK media viewed this announcement as a possible sign of the North Korean regime returning to normal with leader Kim Jong-il's health improving.

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo, left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun and moderate Seoul Shinmun carried a quote from an official from the Obama camp, who said on Jan. 6 (local time) that Wendy Sherman, former U.S. North Korea Policy Coordinator, will likely be named as Special Envoy on North Korea for the incoming Obama Administration. The official was further quoted as commenting that Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill will step down from his position dealing with North Korean affairs.

### Japanese Prime Minister Visits Seoul

The ROK media gave front-and inside-page play to a report quoting the Blue House as announcing yesterday that Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso will visit Seoul for two days from Jan. 11 to discuss pending bilateral issues with President Lee Myung-bak on Jan. 12. In particular, the ROK media noted that the two leaders will agree to launch a joint project to help rebuild Afghanistan during the summit, while commenting that it is unprecedented for the two neighbors to jointly provide foreign aid.

## Opinions/Editorials

"Israel's Indiscriminate Massacre and Its American Accomplice"  
(Hankyoreh Shinmun, January 8, 2009, Page 27)

"Most of the more than 600 Palestinians killed so far are civilians. Under no circumstances can this kind of massacre be justified. Nevertheless, President Bush supported Israel, saying that Israel has decided to defend itself. A UN resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza has not been adopted in the face of American opposition. As Israel's biggest donor, the U.S. is the only country

capable of putting the brakes on the Israeli massacre. However, far from persuading Israel to stop, the U.S. is acting like an accomplice. The U.S. has a lot of blame to bear for this continuing slaughter."

## Features

WEST Program Costs an Applicant 20 Million Won; Is It a "Measure for Youth Employment"?  
(Hankyoreh Shinmun, January 8, 2009, Page 2)

By Reporters Choi Hyun-joon and Kim Min-kyung

Controversy arises over the high cost of the government-run WEST program.

Amid economic downturn and unemployment in the U.S., internship prospects are grim.

Chung Jae-won, 26, a college student who is going to graduate this February, has thought about applying for the WEST (Work, English Study, Travel) Program but finally gave it up. This is because it costs him a lot, and the details of the program are not certain. Chung said, "Besides living expenses, it costs 7,000-9,000 dollars simply to participate in the program and study English in the U.S., and the specific details of the program have not been determined yet," adding, "I will consider using the Working Holiday Program, which allows us to study English and participate in an internship at a lower cost."

Although President Lee Myung-bak cited the WEST program as a good example of a youth employment measure, observers point out that it will only benefit "one percent of university students." Seoul will be implementing the WEST program this coming March. Under the program, Korean college students are allowed to stay in the U.S. for up to 18 months while studying English (5 months), working as an intern (12 months), and traveling (1 month). The program will be launched with an initial 2,300 participants this year, and the number of participants is expected to expand up to 5,000 per year. In his New Year's address on January 2, President Lee Myung-bak introduced this program as a major government policy on youth employment.

The problem is money. According to government data, it costs 5,000-5,800 dollars to study English for five months and 2,500-3,500 dollars to participate in an internship program, including the arrangement fee. The cost of living is not included here. It costs approximately 20 million won, including living expenses, before participants begin to work as an intern. Director of the Consular Service Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Tae Joon-yeol, said "In the beginning, it takes large amounts of money, including the cost of language training, but students can earn money by working as an intern for the remaining 12 months. In short, students can take a language course for 18 months with only 5 months of training costs."

However, no one can be sure whether they will get a job as an intern after completing the language course. The U.S. economic recession and the soaring youth unemployment rate will make it more difficult for Asian students, who are not good at communicating in English, to get a paid job. At the overseas internship project conducted from 2004 to 2006 by Human Resources Development Service of Korea, most participants worked as unpaid interns. The application process for the WEST program is over, but it has not yet been decided where the participants will work as interns. "I'm concerned that nothing has been determined yet regarding the workplace for interns after completion of the course," said a 28-year-old student.

"We have been conducting the project with three counterparts recommended by the U.S. Department of State. Many applicants will work as paid interns," said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Kim Sam-ho, researcher of Korea Higher Education Research Institute commented "I doubt whether the WEST program, that costs students 50 million won, will resolve the youth employment issue."

